



OKLAHOMA STATE  
DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

October 29, 2024

Vice President, Kamala Harris  
c/o The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Vice President Harris,

As the statewide elected Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Oklahoma and the Executive Officer of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (“OSDE”), it is my duty to ensure that the resources allocated to our public schools are counted for and used in the most effective manner possible for the benefit of Oklahoma students’ education.

Due to the federal government’s abject failure to secure the border and enforce immigration law, the ongoing impact of illegal immigration presents an ever-increasing burden upon state and local governments, and our public schools are no exception. We cannot effectively budget or allocate critical resources when we have no accounting of the cost that illegal immigration places on our schools.

That is why in August, I announced in an Oklahoma State Board of Education board meeting that the department would be working with school districts to examine the financial impact borne by Oklahoma taxpayers for education of illegal immigrant children.

After a thorough analysis to determine the most accurate estimate of this cost, I write to demand the reimbursement to the people of Oklahoma the sum of \$474,900,000.00<sup>1</sup>.

This demand amount is, by necessity, an estimate because only your Administration knows the true number of illegal immigrants crossing this Nation’s borders and the actual costs of illegal immigration. Therefore, I also demand a strict and accurate accounting of the total costs incurred by Oklahoma schools that is due, directly, or indirectly, to illegal immigration.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) has encountered close to half a million unaccompanied, alien children since you and President Joe Biden assumed office.<sup>2</sup> Educating these children imposes a significant financial burden and presents additional obstacles that your Administration seems to ignore. For example, greater challenges now exist in the areas of English proficiency, tutoring ESL students, classroom management, transportation, and budgeting for

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<sup>1</sup> oklahoma2023.pdf (fairus.org)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Retrieved Aug. 2024, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>.



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future costs. Each of these issues may have permanent implications on the education and academic performance of students in Oklahoma public schools.<sup>3</sup>

As of 2017, the burden placed on all U.S. taxpayers by illegal immigration was an estimated \$115 billion.<sup>4</sup> As of 2022, the estimated population of illegal immigrants in all U.S. states was 10,990,000.<sup>5</sup> The estimated number of unauthorized immigrant children in 2022 was 1,230,000.<sup>6</sup> Notably, the cited study does not provide an estimate of the number of unauthorized immigrant children in Oklahoma.

According to the United States Department of Education (“DOE”), from 2021 to 2023, nearly 3,000 unaccompanied immigrant children were sent to sponsors in Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup> Oklahoma spends more than \$11,000 per pupil, making the total, additional cost to taxpayers approximately \$33,000,000.00 since you and President Biden assumed office.<sup>8</sup> Notably, this estimate does not account for illegal immigrant children that are not unaccompanied. This is only one example of increased education costs Oklahomans must pay.

In the 2022 school year, 5.3 million students in the United States (approx. 10%) were designated as Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”).<sup>9</sup> Correspondingly, according to the DOE, approximately 414,451 teachers nationwide held the proper certifications to adequately educate LEP students.<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that nearly 100,000 additional LEP teachers will be necessary within the next five (5) years.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 100,000 teachers are serving as LEP instructors, despite lacking the proper certification.<sup>12</sup> Oklahomans are feeling the impact. More than 6,000 students in Oklahoma are designated as LEP, and it is estimated that Oklahoma will need an additional 1,065 properly certified teachers in the next five (5) years.<sup>13</sup> This is another, obvious,

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<sup>3</sup> Marino, Kuckelman, Burke, Ries, The Consequences of Unchecked Illegal Immigration on America’s Public Schools, The Heritage Foundation (Feb. 2024) Retrieved Aug. 2024, <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/the-consequences-unchecked-illegal-immigration-americas-public-schools>.

<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, Raley, Martin, The Fiscal Burden of Illegal Immigration on United States Taxpayers, Federation for American Immigration Reform (Sep. 2017) Retrieved Aug. 2024, <https://www.fairus.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/Fiscal-Burden-of-Illegal-Immigration-2017.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2018 to January 2022 (dhs.gov)

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, (2024) Retrieved Aug. 2024 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>.

<sup>8</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, (2022) Retrieved Aug. 2024 [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23\\_236.75.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_236.75.asp).

<sup>9</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, English Learners in Public Schools, Condition of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. (2024) Retrieved Aug. 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.

<sup>10</sup> United States Department of Education, “Ed Data Express Data Download Tool,” Retrieved Aug. 2024, [https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/download?f%5B0%5D=file\\_spec%3A067&f%5B1%5D=school\\_year%3A2019-](https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/download?f%5B0%5D=file_spec%3A067&f%5B1%5D=school_year%3A2019-).

<sup>11</sup> Id.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

<sup>13</sup> Id.



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additional education cost borne by state taxpayers that is directly attributable to illegal immigration.

The OSDE is now tasked with budgeting for these increased costs and meeting the additional teaching, tutoring, program, and other resource needs necessary to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education as mandated by 34 C.F.R. § 300.101.

In conclusion, President Biden tasked you with remediating the crisis of illegal immigration at the southern U.S. border. Under your supervision, the costs in education due to illegal immigration have risen astronomically. Your failed oversight and efforts are a direct cause of the current crises Oklahoma and other states now face. Oklahoma taxpayers, schools, teachers, and parents should not bear the burden of your failings. They deserve better. Monetary relief will not solve all the challenges we now face. But repayment is warranted and will provide an adequate foundation as Oklahomans work together to solve the emergencies you and this Administration have caused.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ryan Walters".

Ryan Walters,  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State of Oklahoma